

Esther 7:1-10 'For Every Deed Will Be Uncovered: Whether Good Or Evil!'

Last time in Esther we looked at chapter 6:12-14 in a sermon I called 'It is God who lifts up and it is God who cuts down'. In v12, after being heralded throughout the citadel of Susa as "the man the king delights to honour," by Haman's own mouth no less, we saw Mordecai "returned to the king's gate." And I said that after being honoured by the king, Mordecai simply got back to work. He didn't let this go to his head, that would be to fall into Satan's trap. And in doing so, Mordecai would have in effect become Haman!

We saw from Psalm 75, that "it is God who judges, He brings one down and exalts another." Yes Haman was learning that valuable lesson which we all need to learn. That we are not in control of our destiny, God is! And "He will not contend with man forever." In v13, Haman seeks advice from his already gathered counsellors. In chapter 5 it was 'kill Mordecai'. But now it is basically 'kill yourself!' And I explained that unlike Haman's fair-weather friends, it is a great blessing to have people in our lives who always have our back. Not those who are only always there for us in a crisis (which is also indeed a blessing) but those who always tell us not only what we want to hear, but what we need to hear, even when it hurts! In chapter 5 they had told Haman what he wanted to hear but now they are telling him what he needed to hear. And yet it is all too late. He had sought to execute "the man the king delights to honour," and now it was all coming undone! As Christians, we need to be those who speak the truth, and to have those who preached the truth to us, I said. Yes God's gospel Bible truth!

Finally in verse 14 Haman is "hurried away to the banquet." He was not ready. And he was unprepared for what awaited him, but he could not refuse the King's invitation. And so it will be for all of humanity when God's Angel of death finds us. We will have no say in the matter. The question is, will we be prepared? Having come to Him only, through the death of His Own Son Jesus' Blood!

And so we pick up the narrative this morning in Esther 7:1-10 'For Every Deed Will Be Uncovered: Whether Good Or Evil!' V1 "So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther." Now friends let's remember that this is the same day as Haman's being taken down more than a peg or two. "Who would the king rather honour than me?" he thought. Yet the king says now "go and do all that you mentioned; leave nothing out, for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate." "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour."

'What am I going to do?' he asks his wife and his hangers on? Well you had better kill yourself, you're done for! "Then while they was still talking he was hurried away." Again he wasn't ready, no he wasn't prepared, he didn't know what he was going to say. All he did know was that basically his head was on the chopping block, due to his actions toward Mordecai "that man the king delights to honour." He hadn't had time to have the gallows pulled down and I've no doubt, that he also had no excuse which he could use to explain all of this way!

But you see, the situation was actually far worse than he could have ever imagined. Because he didn't know that the Queen herself, (the King's own favourite) was herself indeed a Jew! Friends, the terror that must have been running through this man's mind, I don't believe we can even begin to imagine. And he was going to have to go through all of those proceedings at the banquet waiting for the axe to fall. He was sure that it was all going to come out somehow, but he didn't know when! V2 "And as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king asked again, 'Queen Esther. What is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the Kingdom it will be

granted.” You know, perhaps Haman may well have been thinking as the wine flowed freely, *‘Maybe the danger has passed? The king has not said anything, and he seems to be in good spirits. I did carry out his last instructions to the letter.’* And now that the King’s attention was focused solely upon the Queen, yes perhaps he was safe!

Beloved, these are the kinds of whisperings that Satan uses, to both keep unbelievers from Christ’s path, and also to entice believers away from Christ’s path. That “Narrow gate” and that “Narrow road that leads to life.” As my young friend Lincoln, that I’ve been sharing the gospel with said to me recently, “Roy each time I drive past the hall and I see your sign, a voice tells me that I should go in. But then there is yet another voice that tells me stay away!” It’s how Satan works. He seeks to influence our thoughts by using both our fears and our self-confidence against us. Haman knew he was in danger; But then who knows, perhaps the danger has passed? But friends as believers, with the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts, we immediately know what is right and what is wrong.

And also Brethren, even if we are not born again by the Blood of Christ and the Spirit of God in our hearts, Romans 1 tells us that “we are without excuse” because God has made Himself known to us within His Creation! The Bible also says that we “are created in His image.” So even fallen humanity instinctively knows right from wrong. But Satan whispers in our ears, (as he did with Eve in the garden) that God lies. He will not know, or He does not care. The consequences of our actions will not find us out.

But it is Satan who is the liar. Indeed he “is the father of all lies” the scriptures tell us. Because as Haman is about to find out before the king, before God, our deeds will all be uncovered, and we will be discovered by them, because nothing is hidden from God! Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 “Now all has been heard, here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil.” Now friends I know I’ve used a little bit of poetic licence at this point on Haman’s situation. But this is indeed how Satan works. Within seeking to twist and influence our thinking concerning how we stand before God, as our true King! Well again v2 “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be giving you. What is your request? Even up to half the Kingdom, it will be granted.”

Now friends, as we view this passage, two things we need to be aware of. Firstly, at this point at least, there is no doubt that Esther is unaware of the gallows that Haman has had built for Mordecai. And secondly, she is fully aware, that the king has just honoured Mordecai at Haman’s hand, so to speak. And since Mordecai is a Jew, (and along with herself and all of her people likewise condemned to death, and yet has just been honoured by the king, within these things) God has really paved the way for her “petition and her request.” V3 “Queen Esther answered, (and notice how she does answer) “If I have found favour with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty.” We must remember, that we have been seeing throughout all of this series that this king rarely makes any decision of his own. And although in reality Esther has no power of her own, what she does have though, is the favour that she has found in the king’s eyes. And she actively seeks to pursue that favour for herself, and the rescuing of her people, but within this humble yet bold approach, because she is seeking to get him to do what he doesn’t ordinarily do. And that is to make a decision on his own!

And now that she has gently stroked his ego, (for want of a better description) by acknowledging that all of the power is in his hands alone, even preparing the ground for her words, she doesn’t beat about the bush she lays it all on the line. She says, “Grant me my life.” Immediately the king must have thought. What? “Grant you your life.” Who dares to threaten the life of the queen? Yes “Grant

me my life, this is my petition. And spare my people, this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation.” Did you notice? That she has used the very words from Haman’s own decree in chapter 3. “To destroy, kill and annihilate.” She says that they “had been sold.” Remember Haman had offered to pay into the king’s coffers 10,000 talents of silver. Two thirds of the entire yearly tax revenue of the 50 million strong Persian Empire!

Now at this point, though momentarily Haman has taken a backseat in the narrative, at these words of the Queen, he must have been dying a thousand deaths. Those words of his own decree, must have burned into his very soul. And as Esther continues, again, notice how she does this as she humbly appeals to the king’s ego! “If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.” “Wise as serpents and gentle as doves” Jesus said. She’d used her words wisely. She had also spoken her words with humility. *I would not have bothered you if we were only going to be sold as slaves O king. It would have been too small a matter to have troubled you my king.* Too you smaller matter? It had taken four years for the Queen to be chosen.

Beloved, surely what we are seeing here, (even as we saw at the start of the series) is that Esther was no wallflower. She won their head eunuchs favour by actively pursuing that favour with her sweet, sincere and compliant nature. But a wallflower she certainly was not. And she was also no one’s fool. Yes it’s true like all of us at times, she had to be pressed into stepping up to the plate for her people. But as we know now that she had, she was in boots and all, as she laid her life on the line!

Now in v7 we read the words. “The king got up in a rage.” Well the scriptures tell us that “as a man sows, so shall he reap.” Haman had acted again and again out of “rage.” “Enraged” that Mordecai would not bow down to him in fear or pay him honour. “Full of rage” he went home after the first banquet when encountering “Mordecai at the king’s gate.” And now what he would have had visited upon the people of God, (yes what he indeed had intended for evil) God would return back up on his own head, and with interest! V5 “King Xerxes asked Queen Esther. Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?” ‘Oh oh’, Haman must have thought!

Friends if the truth be known, what has led to this situation, is the King’s own impotence and inadequacy’s as a true ruler. Yes if the truth be known in answering the king’s question as to “Who has dared to do such a thing?” He needs to look no further than his own mirror! He had personally placed his own signet ring of authority upon Haman’s finger. He himself had signed off on the death warrant as it were, caring little or nothing about the details. Remember, ‘*Haman don’t worry about the money, I will foot the bill*’, and then they celebrated the agreement by getting drunk together.

Beloved, Xerxes is not Robinson Crusoe in this is he? Often we can be like this can’t we? In whatever the situation may be in which we find ourselves, on what I guess is the wrong end of the stick, we are often looking for someone else to blame. We can be ready to lop the head off of just about everyone around us, but then by God’s Grace we just happened to walk past a mirror. Or far better than that of course, is that in His Mercy, we are led to hold the mirror of his Word up against our own words and deeds! Yes how did I get here? How did I get into this situation? Who did this to me? “Who is he?” The king says, “Where is the man (and may I add woman) who dares to do such a thing?” Well sadly, it is often ourselves, isn’t it. We spoke without thinking. We leaped before we looked. And we acted perhaps with no regard for anyone else but ourselves. And also perhaps most importantly, we did it all without any thought whatsoever of prayerfully committing our way ahead to God! And friends, I’m simply speaking of my own personal experience here. As I see myself in both Xerxes and Haman!

Meanwhile, as Haman is trying to gather together what's left of any confidence or self-respect or courage that he did have after the words, "Who is he? Where is the man who would dare to do such a thing?" Knowing that Esther's words had come from his own decree, and knowing now that the Queen herself was indeed a Jew. There was nowhere to go, and there was no place to hide. He knew what was coming, and Esther didn't miss him. V6 "Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman." No she didn't miss him. It's a good word she uses here "vile." In the old Collins dictionary it is defined as worthless, base, depraved, repulsive, shockingly bad. He "is the adversary and the enemy."

You know friends I really do believe that in our modern world, that it's easy for us to lose sight of the fact that we as Christians have "an adversary and an enemy." We can almost comically (that's if that is a word) deny the existence of Satan as some person dressed in a red suit with horns and a tail, and carrying a pitchfork. But both Peter and Paul, never viewed Satan in such a trivial way! 1 Peter 5:8 "Beware your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour." And Ephesians 6:10-13 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." But friends we must not fear the devil, we must fear God and trust that all things are in his hands. And yet we must be aware that we have an "adversary and an enemy"; he is real, and he seeks our soul!

V6b "Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen." It's another good word "terror," it is defined as extreme fear. Violent dread. It's where we get the notion of someone dying of fright. Have you ever been there? When your heart felt as if it would just explode out of your chest? I have. It is indeed a violent dread. There is no better way to explain it. It is as if someone were trying to tear the very life out of you. Yes "terrifying" it truly is. Well that's where Haman now finds himself. "The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden." So it was not looking good, and of course Haman knew it!

"But Haman, realising that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life." The Bible commentator Ian Duguid explains that Xerxes' "rage" was not so much because of the evil of the plan, (though certainly Esther did hold his favour as the Queen his favourite wife) but more so that his own stupidity and complicity in this genocidal plan, had come to the surface. We know that he cared very little for human life, that is why he had signed off on Haman's plan in the first place without a second thought. What he did care for though, was how he was perceived in the sight of others, and particularly his subjects! Yes what this "rage" was really about was that he'd been exposed for the phoney that he really was. Yes he had all the power, but as far as real leadership goes he was sadly lacking. As we saw at the start of this series, basically the king has no clothes!

And in a strange twist in some ways, he is in a similar position as Haman. They had both been exposed, for who they really were. The dilemma the king now faces though, is what is he going to do? Who will tell him what to do? His own king's selection, Haman, had placed him in this untenable position. What can he do? Well to his relief, soon the decision is made for him! V8 "Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" Now the question is, was Haman really seeking to sexually assault the queen? Of course not. This was the King's get out of gaol free card. His indignation is concealing his relief, as his course

of action is given to him. Look, it's not even him who acts in this instance. V8c "As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face." The man who would be the executioner, even the genocidal destroyer of the Jews, within 24 hours has gone from grand vizier, to judge, would be executioner, to town crier, eating at the king's table, to condemned man. As the saying goes, 24 hours is a long time in politics!

Notice that even the style of death is decided for the king. V9 "Then Habona, one of the king's eunuchs attending the king said, "A gallows 75 feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai who spoke up to help the king". The king said, (just four words in all) "Hang him on it." V10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the King's fury subsided."

Yes friends "every deed will be uncovered, whether good or evil." Or in other words, nothing is hidden from God, and all of humanity will have to give an account to Him for their life! Yes "pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Haman's vanity and enmity was "enraged" when this Jew refused to bow down to him. Perhaps even refusing to beg for his life. Well ironically, he would be forced he to fall down before the Queen of the Jews to beg for his own life, but to no avail. His life had been exposed, uncovered before God, and as with all of us apart from Jesus, he had been found wanting!

Friends, what kind of man was Xerxes? What kind of a king was Xerxes? Well he was much the same as Haman. Both were weak willed and fuelled by their vanity and arrogance. They were spineless selfish men who were steered by the ill will and whisperings of others. Always out for self at any cost, and with no regard for the consequences of actions. Haman paid the price that was his due. And in some 10 years or so Xerxes also would fall by assassination. He was a king who would lavish gifts upon his people of wine and food, (not because he cared for them) but simply to purchase their devotion, because like Haman, he craved their adoration and worship. And yet on a mere whim, he could annihilate hundreds of thousands without a second thought. He could sacrifice them to please others or simply because it was convenient. Dare I say, this king would do well in politics in Australia today!

And yet what of our King Jesus? While Xerxes would sacrifice his people for their mistakes. Jesus sacrificed Himself to pay for ours. While Xerxes' pride, arrogance and vanity knew no bounds. Jesus the Creator of the entire universe, was born of a virgin, and came riding on a donkey as a lowly carpenter's son! Well Xerxes' murderous reign would last a mere 16 or 17 years. Jesus' Kingdom and reign lasts unto eternity! As the wonderful old hymn goes, 'Who is He in Yonder stall, at whose feet the shepherds fall? Tis the Lord. O wondrous story. Tis the Lord. The King of glory. At His feet we humbly fall, crown Him, crown Him Lord of all!'

O dear friends, as it was with Haman's actions before his king Xerxes, our every word and action and even every thought will be exposed, before God. "Whether good or evil." Let us humbly come before Him now, while there is yet still time. And confess to Him, it is in You alone O Christ do I stand. Yes Lord Jesus, O Lamb of God I come, I come.

Let's pray!